

## Message Text

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47

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /057 W

----- 012928

R 141516Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0047

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE DECISION: ACT  
ONE

REF: BONN 6971

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE CHRISTIAN  
DEMOCRATIC UNION UNANIMOUSLY VOTED MAY 12 TO SUPPORT  
HELMUT KOHL AS CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE FOR 1976. UNTIL  
ALMOST THE LAST MOMENT SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MINISTER  
PRESIDENT STOLTENBERG MAINTAINED THAT HE WAS A CANDIDATE.  
HOWEVER, FACED WITH AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY FOR KOHL  
ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, STOLTENBERG REMOVED HIMSELF FROM  
THE RACE. THE CSU CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN THAT FRANZ  
JOSEF STRAUSS IS THE BAVARIAN PARTY'S CANDIDATE. A  
JOINT CDU/CSU MEETING HAS BEEN SET FOR JUNE 10 TO NEGOTIATE  
ABOUT THE UNION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE, POLICY  
ISSUES AND PERSONNEL QUESTIONS. KOHL'S ACTIVE PARTICI-  
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PATION IN RECENT LAENDER ELECTIONS HAS IMPROVED HIS

NATIONAL IMAGE. AN APRIL PUBLIC OPINION POLL SHOWED THAT 61 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HAD A FAVORABLE OPINION OF KOHL COMPARED WITH 26 PERCENT IN MARCH 1971. THE CDU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE STILL LAGS BEHIND SPD CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WHO RECEIVED A 68 PERCENT RATING IN THE APRIL POLL. END SUMMARY

1. ON MAY 12, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO SUPPORT HELMUT KOHL'S CANDIDACY FOR THE CHANCELLORSHIP OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC IN 1976. CDU SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF ANNOUNCED APRIL 27 THAT, FOLLOWING THE MAY 4 NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN ELECTION, HE WOULD PROPOSE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD THAT HELMUT KOHL BE NOMINATED (REFTEL). IT IS CLEAR THAT BIEDENKOPF HAD CHECKED WITH THE CDU LAND LEADERS BEFORE MAKING THE STATEMENT AND THE KOHL BAND WAGON GAINED MOMENTUM WITHIN THE CDU FOLLOWING THE ELECTION. UNTIL ALMOST THE LAST MOMENT, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MINISTER PRESIDENT STOLTENBERG MAINTAINED THAT HE WAS A CANDIDATE, BUT FACED WITH AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY FOR KOHL ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, STOLTENBERG REMOVED HIMSELF FROM THE RACE.

2. THERE ARE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS AS TO WHY STOLTENBERG TOOK SO LONG TO READ THE WRITING ON THE WALL. SOME CDU MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT HE IS REALLY PLAYING A WAITING GAME (I.E., ALTHOUGH HE REALIZED AFTER HIS RELATIVELY WEAK SHOWING IN THE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN ELECTION APRIL 13 THAT HE STOOD LITTLE CHANCE OF GAINING THE NOMINATION FOR 1976) AND HOPES TO BE THE UNION CANDIDATE IN 1980. HOWEVER, SOURCES CLOSE TO KOHL BELIEVE THAT STOLTENBERG HAS BEEN MISLED BY HIS FRIENDS AND ADVISERS IN THE PARTY INCLUDING THE SPRINGER PRESS THAT HIS SUPPORT WAS MORE WIDESPREAD THAN, IN FACT, WAS THE CASE. IN ANY EVENT, WHEN HE WENT INTO THE MAY 12 MEETING, IT WAS CLEAR THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, KOHL AND BIEDENKOPF HAD LINED UP ALL THE OTHER CDU LAND ORGANIZATIONS.

3. THE VOTE OF THE CDU EXECUTIVE BOARD IS ONLY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FIRST MAJOR HURDLE FOR KOHL. CSU SECRETARY GENERAL TANDLER STILL MAINTAINS PUBLICLY THAT FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS IS THE CSU CANDIDATE. CDU SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF BELIEVES (PROBABLY CORRECTLY) THAT THIS IS A MATTER OF POKER PLAYING ON THE PART OF THE CSU TO STRENGTHEN ITS HAND IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CDU SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 10 IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM CONCESSIONS ON POLICY ISSUES AND PERSONNEL QUESTIONS.

4. FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS PRESENTS A PARTICULAR DILEMMA FOR THE CDU. THE SUPPORT OF STRAUSS (AND THE CSU) IS NECESSARY FOR KOHL TO BECOME THE CDU/CSU CANDIDATE IN 1976 AS WELL AS TO ATTRACT RIGHT-WING VOTERS IN NEXT YEAR'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ESPECIALLY

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----- 012778

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SHOULD AN ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE FOURTH PARTY ENTER THE RACE. ON THE OTHER HAND, STRAUSS' HARD-LINE SONTHOFEN SPEECH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE HURT THE CDU IN THE ELECTIONS IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND THE SAARLAND. SOURCES CLOSE TO KOHL CLAIM THAT THE RHEINLAND-PFALZ MINISTER PRESIDENT WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP HIS BAVARIAN COLLEAGUE UNDER CONTROL DURING NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN; AT LEAST TO THE EXTENT OF AVOIDING ANY NEW SONTHOFEN SPEECHES.

5. THE MAY 12 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING DID NOT APPROVE THE CDU STRATEGY PAPER DRAFTED BY BIEDENKOPF AND VON WEIZSAECKER. WE ARE TOLD THAT THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE CDU EXECUTIVE BOARD OVER THE MAIN POINTS OF THE STRATEGY PAPER BUT THAT IT SIMPLY NEEDS FURTHER POLISHING.

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6. KOHL'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE RECENT LAENDER ELECTIONS HAS HELPED HIM TO BUILD UP A NATIONAL IMAGE. AN APRIL PUBLIC OPINION POLL SHOWED THAT 61 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION HAD A GOOD OPINION OF THE RHEINLAND-PFALZ MINISTER PRESIDENT (AS COMPARED TO 68 PERCENT FOR CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT). STOLTENBERG RECEIVED 50 PERCENT WHILE FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS' POPULARITY DROPPED FROM 40 PERCENT TO 33 PERCENT (WITH 54 PERCENT REGISTERING AN UNFAVORABLE OPINION OF STRAUSS).

7. WHILE KOHL STILL LAGS BEHIND THE CHANCELLOR, HIS POPULARITY HAS RISEN FROM 26 PERCENT IN MARCH 1971 TO 61 PERCENT IN APRIL 1975. SCHMIDT'S POPULARITY IN MARCH OF 1971 WAS 64 PERCENT. IT IS CLEAR THAT HELMUT KOHL WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE TO WORK VERY HARD IF HE IS TO MAKE HIMSELF A CREDIBLE OPPONENT OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT. HE HAS, HOWEVER, COME A LONG WAY ON THE NATIONAL SCENE AND HAS HANDLED HIMSELF WITH CONSIDERABLE SKILL. BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE 10, THE CDU WILL ATTEMPT TO BOOST HIS STOCK FURTHER IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN HIS NEGOTIATING POSITION VIS-A-VIS STRAUSS AND TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION CAMPAIGN. BE THIS AS IT MAY, KOHL, WHO IS A WILY AND EXPERIENCED POLITICO, WILL FACE A MAJOR TEST AS CDU CANDIDATE-DESIGNATE IN THE JUNE 10 NEGOTIATIONS.  
HILLENBRAND

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NOMINATION, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 MAY 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ellisoob  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BONN07746  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750169-0473  
**From:** BONN  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750551/aaaabltt.tel  
**Line Count:** 209  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 BONN 6971  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ellisoob  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 29 MAY 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2003 by ellisoob>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE DECISION: ACT ONE  
**TAGS:** PINT, GE, CDU, (KOHL, HELMUT)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006